

Tobacco Auction Has New Site

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff
QUARRYVILLE (Lancaster Co.) — The Pennsylvania Tobacco Marketing Association has a new location for the auction.

Plans are under way to house the tobacco auction at the Solanco Fairgrounds in Quarryville.

According to Dennis Hess, auction manager, work needs to be done at the site, including installing loading docks. But a tentative sale has been set for the first Wednesday or Thursday in January (Jan. 3 or 4). A phone number and an exact auction date and time will be provided in the weeks ahead.

Hess noted, "Some buyers will support us." Private purchase of tobacco has been occurring the past several weeks.

Through private sales, some tobacco is moving at a fairly good price, Hess noted. He's heard growers are receiving \$1.00-\$1.25 per pound.

Hess said a private buyer is purchasing Maryland 609 type for a cigarette made entirely from tobacco grown here.

However, growers should keep in mind that if they are association members, they must ensure that the association receives 3 cents per pound on all tobacco sold privately or processed.

Last year, growers received about 42 cents per pound if the signed up for the money from the tobacco industry settlement. This year, the price said Hess is "considerably less." The settlement checks are going in the mail the first couple days in January, noted Hess.

Growers should make sure they grade the tobacco properly, noted Hess, and keep the moisture levels down. They should also keep bales light. The ideal weight for tobacco bales is between 50-60 pounds. If they are packed together and become too heavy, the tobacco can become damaged, especially if wet.

Also, for growers who experienced blue mold problems in tobacco, that tobacco should be graded separately, said Hess.

For more information about the auction, contact Hess at (717) 626-6970.

Philly Farmers' Markets Offer Great Opportunities

PHILADELPHIA — You might want to think about taking advantage of new opportunities to increase your farm income by selling at some of the outdoor farmers' markets springing up here.

More than 30 farmers already benefit from profits from markets in Philadelphia.

Farmers who sell at farmers' markets report that people in cities are used to paying more for produce, and a farmer can get good prices and generate positive returns — more than enough to cover transportation and other costs. Farmers can expect average sales of more than \$600 during a four-hour market.

The first thing Ben Franklin did when he arrived in Philadelphia was buy three loaves of bread at Philadelphia's original farmers' market. Next summer, that same market will be resur-

rected at Second and Market Streets, heralding a return to our roots.

For more information about this and other market opportunities, contact the Farmers' Market Trust at (215) 568-0830 or (800) 417-9499. The Philadelphia-based Farmers' Market Trust operates an extensive network of farmers' markets and is eager to talk with farmers interested in trying markets.

Creating farmers' markets is one proven way to sustain farming. They provide a major sales outlet for agricultural producers, supporting a growing number of family farms.

Farmers' markets help farmers increase farm income, at the same time that they provide communities with locally grown, fresh produce. They improve nutrition and boost the local farm economy. They also are proving to be potent ways to recreate a sense of community.

Each year, new outdoor farmers' markets spring up across this region. According to the National Farmers Market Directory, there are 2,863 farmers' markets operating nationwide — a number that has increased by 63 percent in the last six years.

State and federal agriculture departments fund Farmers' Market Nutrition Program coupons for qualified mothers, infants, and children to purchase fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets. In Pennsylvania, those programs help families as well as seniors living on limited incomes buy nutritious food at farmers' markets.

Consumers, great chefs and passionate community activists throughout our region can find joy in the bounty that our local farmers produce. We are simple steps away from being reconnected with the fertile earth that grows our food. Working together, we can reclaim our land and give thanks to our bounty.

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